

**UNIVERSITY OF STUDIES OF PADUA**  
**TEACHING FACULTY**

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**THE SPIRITUALITY**  
**of**  
**LEOPOLDINA NAUDET**  
**in her**  
**SPIRITUAL JOURNAL**

**Moderator: Prof. Alberto DECCHI**

**SISTER PIA ACCORDINI**

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## **PRESENTATION**

In taking up this work of research and deepening my understanding of the writings of Leopoldina Naudet, I came principally to understand that I was making some contribution, however modest, to the history of the spirituality of the 19th Century. A contemporary Author observes that in trying to bring out the characteristics of that period, it is impossible to draw on the personal nuances of each figure<sup>1</sup>. This would require a more particular and profound study, on the greater part of the unpublished documents held in archives.

This is truly the situation of Mother Leopoldina Naudet. Prior to this present effort, her personal writings were not studied in depth as a principal font in order to trace out her spirituality. The work of Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove <sup>2</sup> is more historical and biographical in style, but does leave ample space for the development of her spiritual make-up. Fr. Stofella's study <sup>3</sup> is a commentary on a very limited part of her Spiritual Journal, taking up the years 1811-1813. However, it was precisely this study which opened for me a ray of light into the richness of the spiritual motivations in the writings of Leopoldina. This appeared to me as the most valid and immediate means to achieve the scope previously announced.

Therefore, the principal source of this present endeavor is constituted by the **Spiritual Journal**. This contains the personal jottings of Mother Naudet that she would write down on the occasion of her retreats, days of recollection, or on other occasions of rather intense spiritual activity in her life

The First Part of this study presents the history surrounding the composition of the **Spiritual Journal**, so that the reader might have forthwith some knowledge of her writing. In the Second Part of this work, however, I have sought to delineate her spirituality, drawn from:

- the spiritual authors she consulted;
- from the counselors and confessors who had some influence on her spiritual journey;
- from the models of holiness who impressed her, and whom she proposed to imitate;
- from the specific virtues that she practiced that appeared most to those who observed her;
- from her special devotions that express that pure and wholly interior thrust of her soul toward God.

Toward the end, I offer a brief documentation on the particular forms of the spiritual experience of Leopoldina Naudet, with special reference to her mystical life. It seemed to be the most fitting to place this theme as the conclusion of this work, in so far as it constitutes the natural outlet of her intense interior life. This mystical life seems to have been the coronation of her progressive effort at simplification, which appears so very often throughout this work, and is one of the characteristics of her psychology.

Sister Pia Accordini, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup>A. Prandi, "Correnti e figure nella spiritualità cattolica nei secoli XIX e XX", in: *La Chiesa cattolica nella storia dell'umanità*, Fossano 1966, V, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>N. Dalle Vedove, *Dalla corte al chiostro, donna Leopoldina Naudet, fondatrice delle Sorelle della Sacra Famiglia*. Verona: 1954.

<sup>3</sup>G. Stofella, "Il diario spirituale di Leopoldina Naudet e il ven. don Gaspare Bertoni", *IL BERTONIANO*.

a monthly periodical reserved to the Stigmatines. Verona 1930, XVth Year, supplement to n. 1.

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April 30 1812; December 14, 1814.  
One Letter in the hand-writing of Madalene di Canossa, to her niece, Metilda, Bergamo:  
January 27, 1835.

#### The Diocesan Archives of Verona

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#### State Archives [Milano]

- Communique' from the Royal Government of Lombardy on the Sovereign Approbation granted to the Institute of the Holy Family, May 11, 1833. "Worship", Modern Section 2704, fasc. 575.
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- The Petition of the Bishop of Verona addressed to the Minister of Worship of the Reign of Italy. Verona, May 18, 1815. "Worship", Modern Section - 6319.

#### State Archives [Verona]

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- A Document regarding the already granted Pension of the Naudet Sisters [Louise and Leopoldina], April 1819, n. 705.
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- Metilde di Canossa. Epochs in the life of the Ven. Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family. fasc. ms. 1835. Doc. 39.
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1826-1831.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

Arch.S.d.S.f. Verona      Archivio Sorelle della Sacra Famiglia, Verona

Arch. Rom.S.J., Roma      Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu, Roma

Arch. Prov. Veneto-Mediol.  
S.J., Milano      Archivium Provinciale Veneto-Mediol. Societatis  
Iesu. Milano

Arch. Segr. Vat. Roma      Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Roma.

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G.S. [*Giornale Spirituale*] = The *Spiritual Journal* of Leopoldina  
Naudet

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Leopoldina Naudet [1773-1834], was born in Florence, Italy, on May 31, 1773, of a family of French origin, which had moved to Florence as part of the Hapsburg-Lorraine Court. As a young child, she lost her Mother in death, and was then entrusted to the Monastery of the Nuns of St. Frediano, in Florence. She subsequently received her early education in France, with the Sisters of Notre Dame of Soissons. She then returned to Florence at the age of 16. With her sister, Luisa, she later accompanied the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopold to the Court of Vienna, as tutor of the three last Archdukes. She lived in Prague with the Archduchess Maria Anna, named Abbess of the Chapter of Nuns of St. George. She visited with the Abbess the more important cities of Europe, and assumed positions of trust in the Instituted known as “the Beloved of Jesus.” To this community, she committed her life in collaboration with Father Paccanari and the Archduchess.

Padua, Loreto, Venice and Verona were the successive stages on the long journey which Leopoldina traversed sustained by her faith. From 1808 until 1816, she worked in collaboration with Madelene di Canossa. From 1816 until her death, she dedicated herself entirely to the formation of her own religious family, which came into being through her desire to serve God and the Church.

In this enterprise, she found great assistance in the counsels from men well known for their sanctity and learning: Gaspar Bertoni, John Rozaven, John Roothaan and Louis Fusari, the Superior of the Oratorian Priests in Verona.. She left to the Sisters of the Holy Family the challenge of the civic, moral and Christian education of the youth. To these Sisters, she communicated her apostolic ardor, by bringing together the active life and an intense and profound contemplative life.

On December 23, 1833, Pope Gregory XVI approved the religious institute founded by her, crowning years of intrepid expectancy. In the following year, on August 17, 1834, Leopoldina died, repeating to the end to her daughters: “I want only what God wills!”<sup>4</sup> This principle had been the sole program of her entire life, lived without uncertainties, until her death.

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<sup>4</sup>S. Gagnere, *Memorie sulle virtu...*, f. 7.

## PART ONE

### THE “SPIRITUAL JOURNAL”

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#### The “Spiritual Journal” of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet

##### A Description and the History of Its Composition.

The *Spiritual Journal* is a collection of three hand-written fascicles, of different sizes. The first fascicle has about 3 folders, of register size paper. The second fascicle, though, is also the most extended, includes 30 folders, the last being made up of 8 smaller sized sheets. These texts are found all together in one large file, put together without any precise chronological order. To each of the sheets, though, even on the blanks, a progressive number has been given so that the whole work covers about 185 pages. The Original, as a single copy, is kept in the Archives of the General House of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

In recent times there have been made numerous xerox copies of this *Spiritual Journal* without copying, of course, the blank sheets. An effort has been made to order these writings systematically and chronologically, assigning to the pages a new numbering. Thus, following this new system, the end result is a work of about 125 pages, register-sized pages.

In this present study, the intention is to follow this new numeration of the pages.

No comprehensive title was given to these writings, largely because this new presentation of the original pages is posthumous. Leopoldina, of course, never dreamed of making more than a single copy of her writings. It was her daughters who carefully collected these texts and sought to bring them together. Since the ultimate intention of the work was never formally stated, it is evident that there would be no title. As a result, there are only sectional titles, of the various groupings of the pages. Leopoldina herself called some of her papers, *Secret Recollections*<sup>5</sup>; others are called *Journal*<sup>6</sup>; and still others, *Retreats*<sup>7</sup>. Lastly, at the front of a few texts are written the words: *God alone*<sup>8</sup> - and more simply, the apparent the [Italian] abbreviations for this, *D.S.*<sup>9</sup>.

Fr. Stofella<sup>10</sup> assigned to these writings a more pertinent title, the *Spiritual Diary*, which then passed into the current usage and was then accepted also by the most important biographer of Leopoldina Naudet, Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> G.S., 1800, f.13.

<sup>6</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 44; 70.

<sup>7</sup>G.S., 1801, f. 18.

<sup>8</sup>G.S., 1802, f. 38. [In Italian, this would be: *Dio Solo* !]

<sup>9</sup>G.S., 1800, f. 9; 1801, f. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Joseph Stofella, a Stigmatine [1885-1966], made a special study of one part of Leopoldina Naudet's *Spiritual Journal* on the occasion of the 77th anniversary of the death of the Stigmatine Founder, the Venerable [now "Saint"] Gaspar Bertoni. Fr. Stofella reflected particularly on the years 1811-1813 in Leopoldina's writings, with brief references also to other years. He published his work in the *Il Bertoniano*, at that time, a monthly periodical reserved for the Stigmatines, Year XV, Supplement to n. 1. Verona 1930.

<sup>11</sup>N. Dalle Vedove, *Dalle Corte al Chiostro, donna Leopoldina Naudet, fondatrice delle Sorelle della Sacra Famiglia*. Verona 1954.

Someone gathered the fascicles early on, and wrote on the opening folder the words: *The Retreats and other things, in the Hand-writing of the V. Foundress* <sup>12</sup>.

Now, the accepted usage is to call these writings her *Spiritual Journal*, because this is the title that Leopoldina herself gave to the most important section of her Recollections.

The *Spiritual Journal* contains only Leopoldina Naudet's spiritual experiences. Never can one find any reference to events, or to persons, even in the most stormy moments of her life <sup>13</sup> - a time when it would have been most natural to express in some way, on paper, her own sufferings and perplexities. In this matter, Leopoldina is quite different from Madelene di Canossa, who writes down in her own recollections very precise and articulated descriptions, even regarding her friend, Sister Leopoldina Naudet, her guest <sup>14</sup>.

It might seem superfluous to go through the pages of the *Spiritual Journal* one by one for their content, especially since very often, there is the same general motivation for writing. It will suffice here to list in a general way, the most evident parts of the work.

The text opens with two rather minute descriptions of her own state of conscience, which are indicative of Leopoldina's own psychology. There follow then some notes, reflections and resolutions made on the occasion of her retreats. A careful reading of these would indicate that these would include five separate retreats that she had made. There are also indications of a course of Spiritual Exercises that she gave to her own companions <sup>15</sup>. These are all personal notes, spontaneous out-pourings that are found dispersed throughout the work, and these reveal the most intimate motivations and ideals of a woman and foundress. An important place is reserved for her reflections on the Constitutions, which Leopoldina was compiling under the guidance of Venerable [now Saint] Gaspar Bertoni. These begin in Foglio 65 and then are extended throughout the entire *Spiritual Journal*.

Other documents that are very precious, then complete these collection of writings. Among these are the following:

- the Act of Abandonment <sup>16</sup>;
- a copy of her Letter to Pope Pius VII <sup>17</sup>;
- some biblical maxims <sup>18</sup>;

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<sup>12</sup> This most assuredly was Metilde of the Marquis di Canossa [1804-1848], niece of the Blessed Madelene di Canossa, Foundress of the Daughters of Charity. Metilde was educated in the Convent of Leopoldina Naudet. At the age of 20, she left her paternal home in order to enter the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family. She was a woman of much wisdom and virtue, and very soon became Leopoldina Naudet's "right arm". For many years, she served as her secretary, and after the Foundress' death, she was elected Vicareess General of the Institute. Metilde di Canossa was the first one to study Leopoldina Naudet's writings. It was she who gathered the first reminiscences regarding the life and the virtues practiced by her Venerated Mother.

<sup>13</sup> Leopoldina Naudet had much to suffer because of the ecclesiastical condemnation of Fr. Paccanari, that took place in 1808. This event destroyed the work of the Community known as "the Beloved of Jesus", that was begun in Prague in 1799. Another very difficult time in Leopoldina's life was that period that she spent with Blessed Madalene di Canossa, in St. Joseph's Retreat. There, Leopoldina was the Superior of a community which was not her own, while she ardently yearned to found her own Community, which the Lord was suggesting to her for some time.

<sup>14</sup>T Piccari, *Sola con Dio solo...*, pp. 343, ff.

<sup>15</sup>f. 80

<sup>16</sup> f. 108.

<sup>17</sup>f. 115.

- some copies of some passages from her letters <sup>19</sup>;  
- and lastly, some passages taken from the Life of the Servant of God, Teresa Saodata of Salo', and some passages from a Panegyric in honor of St. Francis of Assisi <sup>20</sup>. Leopoldina was not a writer who composed with the intention of rendering her work public. Nor was she a sentimental woman who intended to commit to writing her most intimate experiences. All this can be deduced from the real difficulty she had in taking pen in hand <sup>21</sup>.

Many pages of her *Spiritual Journal* were written in obedience to a precise order of her spiritual director <sup>22</sup>. However, Leopoldina also wrote in it when she no longer had any spiritual director. In these instances, she would document for herself the gifts that she received from the Lord. The first passages in her *Spiritual Journal* were intended for the attentive reading of her spiritual director at that time, Fr. Nicolas Paccanari [1773-1820].

The possibility cannot be excluded that Leopoldina also wrote later so that she would have material to present to Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, in their personal conversations, or to treat with him of her concerns by letter. In fact, several of her Letters to Fr. Bertoni are in regard to spiritual problems, or matters of a spiritual nature <sup>23</sup>.

Lastly, as may be noted in Pourrat's study, it can also be that the spiritual writers of the 19th century followed the style of the times, when so many of them kept their spiritual dairies <sup>24</sup>. However, this fact does not seem to pertain to Leopoldina. If such indeed was the custom of the times, this would be only in the mind of the director who might ask her to write these personal things, as it does not seem that the initiative would ever have come from herself.

The use of this document of hers then, assumes a great importance, in that it becomes a kind of key in order to penetrate into the mystery of Leopoldina and to come to understand better how she was able to bring harmony, despite her many duties and challenges, into balancing her contemplation and activity, in a period in which the monasteries were strictly bound to monastic legislation <sup>25</sup>.

Leopoldina's writing style is most immediate. These pages do not follow any general theme, but present the various moments of her spiritual life. In perusing this document, we can find a report of hers sent to Fr. Paccanari <sup>26</sup>, as well as a letter sent to Pope Pius VII <sup>27</sup>, which represent particular cases. There may also be found impressions she experienced during her retreats, and these too manifest her ready style. During the months of January and February of 1812 <sup>28</sup>, we run into her monthly reports. For what concerns the rest of the document, it seems that what we have here are notes that she would write, most likely at the close of her day. The overall unity of the work is provided by the totality of her expressed thought, since of itself, it is a document built up by fragmentary, unconnected entries. It is up to the reader to attempt a synthesis at the end of the reading. The logical connection between them all does not appear so much from the composition

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<sup>18</sup> f. 48

<sup>19</sup> f. 23 & 24.

<sup>20</sup> f. 936-939.

<sup>21</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 9; 1801, f. 27.

<sup>22</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 9; 1812, f. 85; 1812, f. 89

<sup>23</sup> C. Stofella, *Epistolario...*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>24</sup> P. Pourrat, *La spiritualite' chretienne...*, IV, p. 649.

<sup>25</sup> A copy of Leopoldina Naudet's letter in response to the comments made on her constitutions, presented to her by the most Eminent Cardinals, December 29, 1933. cf. The Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family, Verona.

<sup>26</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 1.

<sup>27</sup> G.S., 1815, f. 115.

<sup>28</sup> G.S., 1812, f. 85.

itself, or even from the avowed intention of the writer, but much more from the unity of the person within herself and from the continuity of the life she lived.

Even in this matter, Leopoldina is different from Mother Madeline di Canossa. In fact, when the revered Marquess set about to writing the reminiscences of her life, that was done in a specific time set aside for this and in a very systematic manner, even though she was not always exact in her chronological memories, as she herself admits <sup>29</sup>.

Regarding her style, Leopoldina manifests no real attention. Very often, her language is obscure and difficult <sup>30</sup>. This defect finds its explanation in the fact that Leopoldina is most often taken up with her thoughts of God, and this made it difficult for her to express herself in the desired clarity <sup>31</sup>. Furthermore, there were many things that she was just unable to state, since they already were ineffable in her own heart, as they pertained solely to the supernatural sphere <sup>32</sup>. Regarding the defect in her punctuation, which is found just about everywhere in her **Spiritual Journal**, her disordered use of capital letters, exclamation points, and question marks, accents and paragraphing, it is necessary to remember Leopoldina's own education. It can be said that she had followed a curriculum of studies very little suited to forming one in any literary style.

In fact, Leopoldina was born in Italy, of French parents. She was educated first in Florence, by the Nuns of St. Fredian, and then later in France, in the celebrated Monastery of Notre-Dame of Soissons. In this period, her preferred authors were Bourdaloue and Massillon <sup>33</sup>. She went then to the Royal Court of Vienna, where she was the instructress of the last three Archdukes. Then she moved on to Prague, in the retinue of the Archduchess, Anna Maria <sup>34</sup>. Finally, she came to Italy to live. Here, too, however, she could not have acquired much of a literary style, in that for a number of years, she moved from one place to another on the peninsula, in search of a place that would be suitable for the foundation of her life's work <sup>35</sup>.

Among the noteworthy elements of Leopoldina's writing style is her frequent use of expressions that smack of French, Latin or the Tuscan language.

Her confusion with French in her writing of Italian is most evident in her manner of accentuating the letter "e" at the end of syllables <sup>36</sup>, and this phenomenon occurs in many words. Her use of pronouns in front of verbs; the verb "to donate, give" [ *donare* ] in place of *dare* <sup>37</sup>; her use of the French *c'est* <sup>38</sup>; her use of *qualche* in place of *alcuni* <sup>39</sup> [perhaps a confusion with the "partitive"].

Regarding her insertion of "Latinisms", it should be noted that these are most evident in her phrasing of sentences, with the use of subordinate clauses, gerundives or infinitives, her verbal constructions, particularly as regards the verb *invenio* and the verb *dono* <sup>40</sup>. There are also true and proper "Latinisms", such as *cura* for "concern", or "preoccupation" <sup>41</sup>; *intestine*, for "internal" <sup>42</sup>; *studio*, for "diligence" <sup>43</sup>; *partire*

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<sup>29</sup> T. Piccari, *Sola con Dio solo* ..., p.319.

<sup>30</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 14.

<sup>31</sup> G.S., 1811, f. 49.

<sup>32</sup> I. Gobry, *L'esperienza mistica*..., p. 98.

<sup>33</sup> M. Canossa, *Memorie*..., f. 1

<sup>34</sup> M. Canossa, *Epoche* ..., f. 5.

<sup>35</sup> M. Canossa, *Epoche*..., f. 10.

<sup>36</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 6.

<sup>37</sup> G.S., 1811, f. 61; 1812, f. 85.

<sup>38</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 5; 1811, f. 66.

<sup>39</sup> G.S., 1811, f. 47; 62.

<sup>40</sup> G.S., 1811, f. 47.

<sup>41</sup> G.S., 1811, f. 79.

<sup>42</sup> G.S., 1800, f. 10.

for “to suffer”<sup>44</sup>; *giovare* for “to assist, help”<sup>45</sup> - and many others. In some passages, there is even found the Latin word<sup>46</sup>.

Less frequent are the “Tuscanisms”, which are resolved for the most part in the use of the “past remote”, or in some other particular expression<sup>47</sup>. What do merit a certain emphasis in her **Spiritual Journal** are the biblical citations, even if these are not very numerous, but are of a fragmentary and occasional character. Leopoldina certainly was familiar with the Old Testament books: Deuteronomy<sup>48</sup>, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Lamentations<sup>49</sup>. She certainly knew the books of the New Testament as well, since, in addition to the four Gospels, she quotes in her writings the Acts of the Apostles<sup>50</sup>, the Epistles to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, 1 Peter, and 1 John<sup>51</sup>. It appears, however, that all these books remained simply texts of consultation, and perhaps not so much of meditation and personal study. There is noted an almost complete absence of every classical citation, from every and all literature. Nonetheless, it is known that Leopoldina had received a complete education under all these aspects<sup>52</sup>. There is only one single, albeit indirect reference, in this regard. It is a matter of a manifestation of conscience, which Leopoldina submitted to the judgment of her spiritual director. In this, she was asking whether it would be better to be silent regarding matters that one remembers or knows<sup>53</sup>.

With this exception of this random indication, judging from her **Spiritual Journal**, Leopoldina would have known only the Bible, the Holy Fathers, and some spiritual writers. In some passages, she quotes St. Augustine<sup>54</sup>, St. Gregory the Great<sup>55</sup>, Propper of Aquitaine<sup>56</sup>, St. Teresa of Avila<sup>57</sup>, St. Ignatius of Loyola<sup>58</sup>, St. Jeanne de Chantal<sup>59</sup>, St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>60</sup>.

Leopoldina’s handwriting is spontaneous and smooth, without evident concerns of presenting herself in a more acceptable manner to the reader. However, it is very clear, and so the reading of her **Spiritual Journal** is never really tiring. Each one of the letters of the alphabet in general is in conformity with the models of the era for handwriting. Between each of the lines there is a space that is more or less uniform in all times and on all of her pages. It happens only rarely that the strokes of a lower line would run into the letters of the upper line, or vice versa. What is evident everywhere, though, is a sense of order, neatness, balance and style. Even the spaces between the words, even though this varies, is always sufficient. The lines follow one another in a notably straight manner. Even though the end of words tends to rise, the first letters of the following word seems to restore the straight line. If it should happen that the line itself should slightly ascend, perhaps around the middle of the line, her tendency is to come back down to the original level.

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<sup>43</sup>G.S., 1813, f. 102.

<sup>44</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 60.

<sup>45</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 71; 78.

<sup>46</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 62.

<sup>47</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 50.

<sup>48</sup>G.S., 1831, f. 125.

<sup>49</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 48.

<sup>50</sup>G.S., 1812, f. 85.

<sup>51</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 48.

<sup>52</sup>M. Canossa, *Epoche* ..., f.2.

<sup>53</sup>G.S., 1801, f. 29.

<sup>54</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 48.

<sup>55</sup>G.S., 1811, f. 48.

<sup>56</sup>G.S., 1831, f.125.

<sup>57</sup>G.S., 1800, f. 11.

<sup>58</sup>G.S., 1813, f. 101.

<sup>59</sup>G.S., 1831, f. 123.

<sup>60</sup>G.S., 1827, f. 120.

Her writing style is always sober. The letters are limited to what is essential for them to be distinguishable. There are no flourishes with the pen, either at the beginning or end of sections, except for a few modest occasions in her writing of capital letters. There just is no wasted motion.

Excluding all pretense in her penmanship and style, it seems that it can be safely affirmed that from Leopoldina's writings, there is revealed a very balanced character, one that is lacking in all rough edges. It appears especially evident that she was a very sober individual, one who was totally distant from all vanity and pride, but she was one who tended always toward the essential. One noteworthy fact is the variation in her handwriting beginning with the year 1811, when she began spiritual direction with Fr. Bertoni. From this moment on, her characters are even clearer, more elegant, but without ever flourishing in any artificial manner. It might almost be said that Leopoldina received from the Minister of God, in addition to his directions and spiritual counsels, also a clear order and precision in her handwriting. From the collection of his Letters one learns that Fr. Bertoni also offered useful suggestions to Leopoldina and her companions regarding the manner of writing, and grammar in general. It is only natural that these disciples would gather in all the suggestions of their teacher, and not only those of a spiritual nature <sup>61</sup>.

An even superficial comparison with the letters sent to Fr. Bertoni there is immediately revealed the authenticity of the **Spiritual Journal** attributed to Leopoldina. An even more evident confirmation is given by the signatures that the authoress puts on her "papers"<sup>62</sup>. There are, then, many other proofs that justify the authenticity of her writings. Above all there is the relative private nature of the document and the fact that it had not passed among different persons. The type of paper she used, as well as the ink, certainly pertained to that period. The entire tradition of her Institute in which no one had ever doubted that the writing was indeed composed by Leopoldina. There is further to be noted the perfect chronological correspondence between the life of the Foundress and her annotations in her **Spiritual Journal**. Lastly, it should be kept in mind that the manuscript is unique of its kind in the Archives, jealously protected in the General House of the Institute, and had never been promulgated to others. There is thus excluded every possibility of any interference on the part of eventual transcribers.

Leopoldina began to write in 1800 <sup>63</sup>, at the age of twenty-seven, and she continued until 1831, three years prior to her death<sup>64</sup>. The **Spiritual Journal** in this arch of time, embraces the period of her full youthfulness until her mature age. She began writing the first pages right after she had entered to become a member of the "Beloved of Jesus", and finished writing at the age of fifty-eight, already the Foundress of the "Sisters of the Holy Family".

The **Spiritual Journal** would offer a kind of precise photograph of Leopoldina's spiritual life, if we did not have to take into account the considerable gaps. However, despite these, it is still possible to see the unity of the work.

Through the reading of her manuscript it is always possible to follow the various stages of Mother Naudet's spiritual journey. The lapses in her writing cover the years 1806-1811; 1815-1820; 1820-1827; and 1827-1831. The most serious is beyond doubt the first one. These years cover that period of the very troublesome matter involving Fr. Paccanari, who was eventually condemned by the Holy Office in 1808. The **Spiritual Journal** in these years contains only a few rare, but yet significant references to this

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<sup>61</sup>G. Stofella, *Epistolario...*, p. 48.

<sup>62</sup>G.S., 1802, f. 34; 1815, f.115.

<sup>63</sup>G.S., 1800, f. 13.

<sup>64</sup>G.S., 1831, f.123.

matter. On one page, Leopoldina confesses that she has had to suffer very much because of injustices <sup>65</sup>.

Once this period of her life had passed, Leopoldina wanted to bury in the secrecy of her heart all these events that she had experienced. She manifested some concern that there should not remain a single of her papers, regarding this unhappy matter. At one stage, she was assured by Father Rozaven that all had been burned <sup>66</sup>. The other lapses can be justified by the many occupations that Leopoldina covered, so taken as she was by the foundation of her Work, and by the “furtive flames” to which she had destined many of her writings <sup>67</sup>.

As a general rule, Leopoldina did not note the complete date of her entries in her **Spiritual Journal**. Often, she just wrote the day of the week <sup>68</sup>, or the day of the month <sup>69</sup>. However, one can rather easily arrive at the reconstruction of the complete date, on the basis of certain well determined data, which are not lacking in her writing, or from other chronological references. In “Foglio” 7, for example, the date is noted with only the day of the week, but already the opening words of her entry read: “Today is the Feast of St. John the Baptist.” From this, it is easily deduced that the date was June 24th. On “Foglio” 13, Leopoldina expresses her total confusion in having arrived at the moment in which she had to preside over her companions, and writes simply: “June 1st.” However, from her biography we know that Leopoldina was elected superior of the “Beloved of Jesus” on June 1, 1800, and thus, the complete date is obtained <sup>70</sup>. In this manner it has been possible to date the entire manuscript with sufficient precision, with the exception of a few passages.

While she was writing her **Spiritual Journal**, Leopoldina traveled throughout various localities in Italy, but she never indicated where she was on her pages. However, it is often easy to determine these places, by following the reminiscences of her life and her biography. Thus, in 1800, Leopoldina wrote an entry from her **Spiritual Journal** from Loreto <sup>71</sup>, where the “Beloved of Jesus” had gone to meet with Pope Pius VII. Then, she made entries from Terraia, of Spoleto <sup>72</sup> and then from the Corsini Palace in Rome <sup>73</sup>. In this entry, Leopoldina notes in her **Spiritual Journal** here reflections during a retreat she was making from October 10 - 16th of 1801. She noted two accounts of her own conscience and on the top of these pages she wrote the slogan, **God Alone**, and her resolutions for the year 1802 <sup>74</sup>. In 1805, we find Leopoldina in the Monastery of St. Clare in Murano <sup>75</sup>. Then, after a silence of five years, we find her in Verona, at St. Joseph’s Retreat, a guest of Mother Madeline di Canossa <sup>76</sup>.

The most precious testimonies she has left are from this period, in which she had met Fr. Bertoni, the Confessor of the community at St. Joseph’s. Again, another four years of silence, and then finally, we find Leopoldina in St. Teresa’s Monastery in Verona,

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<sup>65</sup>G.S., 1802, f. 38-39.

<sup>66</sup>Letter of Fr. Rozaven to Leopoldina Naudet, December 29, 1827. Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family. Verona.

<sup>67</sup>G. Stofella, “Il diario spirituale di Leopoldina Naudet e il Ven. Gaspare Bertoni”, in: *Il Bertoniano*, monthly review reserved to the Stigmatines. XVth Year. Verona 1930. Suppl, to n. 1, p. 293.

<sup>68</sup>G.S., 1800, f. 3

<sup>69</sup>G.S., 1802, f. 21.

<sup>70</sup>N. dalle Vedove, *Dalle Corte al Chiostro...*, p. 108.

<sup>71</sup>M. Canossa, *Epoche...*, f. 10.

<sup>72</sup>M. Canossa, *Epoche ...*, f. 10.

<sup>73</sup>G.S., 1801, f. 18.

<sup>74</sup>G.S., 1802, f. 35.

<sup>75</sup>M. Canossa, *Epoche...*, f. 10.

<sup>76</sup>M. Canossa, *~Epoche...* f. 11.

where she had begun the work of the institution of the “Sisters of the Holy Family”<sup>77</sup>. There are but very few sheets dating from this period, that was so intense and full of activities for Leopoldina, as Foundress. However, there is one passage that merits a most particular reflection. It presents a most minute psychological reflection, both very intimate and authentic, that places the whole spirit of Leopoldina before the reader. This entry manifests her complete spiritual maturity and an almost perfect moral balance<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup>M. Canossa, *Epoche...*, f.11.

<sup>78</sup>G.S., 1827, f. 120.

